



# State of South Carolina

## Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD  
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267  
COLUMBIA 29211

June 2, 2009

The Honorable André Bauer  
President of the Senate  
State House, First Floor, East Wing  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval S. 364, R. 67.

This bill reauthorizes the Volunteer Strategic Assistance and Fire Equipment Program (V-SAFE), first created in 2007. The intent of the legislation is to provide grants to volunteer and combination fire departments through the State Fire Marshall's office.

As in 2007, this bill is a difficult one to veto again. I greatly admire the intent of those who have worked on this legislation, as well as the firefighting community as a whole. Particularly given the recent fires in the Myrtle Beach area, I deeply respect the efforts of each of the volunteer and paid firefighters who make such a difference in peoples' lives here in South Carolina.

I am also reluctant to veto this legislation because it reauthorizes a grant program that is truly competitive – in stark contrast to many of the grants programs that have come out of Columbia in the past few years. These grants are peer reviewed and there is a limit to how much can be awarded.

Notwithstanding the merits of the V-SAFE program, I decided to veto S. 364 because I continue to believe the General Assembly should require local governments to provide some level of matching funds whenever the state distributes these kinds of grants. Water, sewer, police, and firefighting services are fundamentally local responsibilities. As such, we expect local governments to allocate resources to provide for core government services.

I warned the General Assembly when I vetoed V-SAFE in 2007, that it had perpetuated a program that it could not sustain over the long term. This year, the General Assembly did not fund the V-SAFE program, leaving a grants program with no grants. This situation clearly

The Honorable André Bauer  
Page Two  
June 2, 2009

illustrates a point we've been making for some time: responsible government requires that each level of government must live up to its obligations without looking to someone else for assistance.

V-SAFE does not currently have a requirement that local government match the state funding levels. As we have seen in the so-called Competitive Grants program, the availability of "free money" for local governments creates a demand on state funds that otherwise would be met at the local level. Since the creation of the V-SAFE program, there have been over 400 applications, requesting a total of over \$7 million. While I am not opposed to general funds going to support necessary local programs, I believe there should be some local commitment of funds to avoid the "free money" phenomenon.

As I've said before, I applaud the fire departments for their work, and I applaud the legislators who sponsored this bill. Unfortunately, for the reasons described, I am compelled to veto this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Sanford', written in a cursive style.

Mark Sanford